

Telephone Conversation

[Group 4's "Telephone Conversation"](#)

Title

At the mention of the title, one already gets a feel of insincerity and a certain forshadowing of the prejudice in the passage. In a "Telephone Conversation", the 2 parties are unable to see each other face to face thus assumptions will be made.

When and Where

This poem would have probably been written in the mid 20th centuries when the poet lived and during the time of great prejudice against blacks. As stated, "Red booth. Red pillar box. Red double-tiered/Omnibus" depicts a typical scene in the UK.

Who

The speaker in this poem, like the poet Wole Soyinka is a "West African sepi". However, unlike presumptions he seems to be quite intelligent using words such as "Omnibus" and "spectroscopic". Although he is a 'underdog' he is not afraid of indirectly insulting the landlady, who holds the 'stakes'. At first he seems polite and rather well educated as he cast the landlady in goodlight and seemed patient in answering her racist questions. However, it is evident that he grew impatient as at the end of the poem he insulted the landlady by saying "My bottom is raven black ... wouldn't you rather/See it for yourself?". He is also brave in a sense as he choose to admit that he was an african even though he knew that the chances of an african getting an apartment was low. He is a man of quick wit and high education.

The landlady was kindly described by the speaker. A woman of "Pressurized good-breeding ... Cigarette-holder pipped", she seemed intelligent and considerate. However though the speaker considered her as "considerate", the truth was that she only had shallow judgement and was biased as seen when she asked if he was "DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?".

The irony of the 2 characters is clear as they seemed to switch places. The "African", commonly viewed to be less educated was more knowledgable; the 'respectable' woman turned out to be narrow-minded and seemed less intelligent in the light of the speaker.

What

The poem is mainly about the prejudiced faced by Africans in white countries. As from the beginning of the poem, the speaker started by "[confessing]" that he was "African" yet the irony that he never did anything wrong to confess for further outlined the racism. As the speaker apologised for something he cannot control, the question of his colour rose. "ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?" this bluntly showed the prejudiced pre-conception of the whites. The speaker however, wittingly feigned ignorance at the question as frustration mounted. He

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answered in a round-about manner, describing his “peroxide blond” “Palm” and “sole of [his] feet”.The insult by mentioning his “raven black”“bottom” greatly angered the landlady. The irony was that when he “pleaded ... See for yourself?”“ he seemed to refer to his “bottom” along with who he really is.

Structure

The poem is filled with enjambments as it seems to emphasise the poets point and hint of a double meaning to the words. It is also mainly a conversation as noted in the title.

ps forgive all grammar, spelling and sentence structure mistakes.

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I Am

‘I Am’ shows that the person is self-centered. He also talks in the present tense and the inability to continue from ‘I Am’ shows that he does not recognise himself anymore.

I am:yet I am none cares or knows,

shows that he is still living and that no one cares for him.

My friends forsake me like a memory lost, shows that he does not have any friends and that his friends have forgotten him.

I am the self-consumer of my woes, shows that he has no one to express his sadness to.

They rise and vanish in oblivious host, shows that he is the host of his woes and it is obvious that he experiences sadness.

Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost, shows that he is not scared of death, and what lies ahead.

And yet I am! and live with shadows tost, shows that he is surprised that in spite of his difficulties, he is still alive.

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise, shows that people scorn and make fun of him; he is looked down upon.

Into the living sea of waking dreams, shows that he does not live in reality anymore.

When there is neither sense of life nor joys, shows that he has no direction and happiness in life, and that he is “lost”.

But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems, shows that his life's esteems/beliefs/thoughts have been broken/shattered.

And e'en the dearest—that i loved the best—, shows that even the people whom he loved dearly have turned on him. The word ‘loved’ is in the past tense which shows he does not love them anymore.

Are strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest, shows that have started to act as if they do not know him anymore and behave even more stranger than people who do not know the author very well.

I long for scenes where man has never trod;, shows that he wishes to be alone and not to be disturbed.

A place where woman never smil'd or wept, shows that he did

not like people to be emotional or in particular, women to show any feelings.

There to abide with my creator, God, shows that he is religious and believes in heaven/god.

And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept, shows that he was untroubled during his childhood/had a happy childhood.

Untroubling and untroubled where I lie, shows that he does not want to be a disturbance to others and does not want to be disturbed himself.

The grass below—above the vaulted sky, shows that maybe he is describing hell.

Note:

The words at the end of the sentences rhyme.

Done by: Group 2 from 203

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The Man In The Bowler Hat

The Man In The Bowler Hat à Suggests how the author feels that he is not noticed and recognised by those around him.

I am the unnoticed, the unnoticeable man:

The man who sat on your right in the morning train: à **he is an ordinary man**

The man who looked through like a windowpane: à **transparent to others eyes**

The man who was the colour of the carriage, the colour of the mounting

Morning pipe smoke. à **emphasizing on the fact that he is not noticed by others**

I am the man too busy with a living to live, à **caught up with his work and thus has no time to enjoy the little pleasures of the Earth**

Too hurried and worried à **because of work to see and smell and touch**: à **small pleasures of the world**

The man who is patient too long and obeys too much à **follows those around him more than his wants**

And wishes too softly and seldom. à **does want to have his own say but does not dare to speak up**

I am the man they call the nation's backbone. à **important to the nation ; works more 'behind-the-scene'**

Who am boneless à **does whatever he is instructed to-playable catgut, pliable clay**: à **easily influenced by others**

The Man à **capitalized to show how he feels that he is important despite others calling him "Little Lest" they label**

Little à **capitalized to show the contrast between he thinking himself as a Man and the others looking at him as "little" lest**

one day

I dare to grow.

I am the rails on which the moment passes. à **he helps people but they take advantage of him**

The megaphone for many words and voices: à **helps others voice out their opinions though he does not dare speak up for himself**

I am the graph diagram, à just another statistics of the country ;
not only that also shows that his job is to work around with
statistics of the country

Composite face, à a lot of faces cramped together , he is no
more individual and unique

I am the led, à follower the easily-fed, à easily contended
The tool, the not-quite-fool, à used around by others around
him, but he knows that people are using him
The would-be-safe-and-sound, à helps people so that he
would not get into trouble
The uncomplaining, bound,
The dust fine-ground, à stepped on by others, emphasizing on
the fact that he is used by others
Stone-for-a-statue waveworn pebble-round

*Red indicates our annotations

This poem is about an ordinary man who feels that he is not getting the credit that he deserves. He also feels that people around him are taking advantage of him, using him. He has been allowing this to happen for so long in order to stay away from trouble. However, now he does not want this to continue. He wants to be appreciated. He no more wants to be used by others and he want to live a life that he wants, something not instructed by those around him.

Notes about the language used :

- The last verse rhymes : led/fed , tool/fool...
- Alliteration exists in the first verse : mounting morning
- The author likes to use similar words in the same sentence to convey different messages: I am the man whom they call the nation's backbone/ Who am boneless , too busy with a living to live

Done By: Group 1]

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One

- **Persona: Teenager, we can infer from the simple words used.**

One

singular, it has the impact that there is only one
of him.

Only one of me
And **nobody** can get a second one
From a photocopy machine.
Nobody has the fingerprints I have.
Nobody can cry my tears, or laugh my laugh
Or have my expectancy when I wait.
But anybody can mimic my *dance* with my *dog*.
Anybody can howl how I sing out of tune.
And *mirrors* can show me *multiplied*
Many times, say, dressed up in **red**
Or dressed up in **grey**.
Nobody can get into my clothes for me
Or *feel* my *fall* for me, or do my running.
Nobody hears my music for me, either.
I am just this one.
Nobody else makes the words

I *shape* with *sound*, when I talk.
But anybody can act how I stutter in a rage.
Anybody can copy echoes I make.
And mirrors can show me multiplied
Many times, say, dressed up in **green**
Or dressed up in **blue**.

Subject Matter: Identity

Purpose: The persona may be angry at someone who keeps on copying him and the persona's is trying to convey the message that anyone can copy his actions, but no one can copy who he is. Everyone is unique in his/her own way.

The bolded "nobody" is repeated six times throughout the whole poem, emphasizing his purpose and also his anger.

Emotions: The colours (highlighted in red), "grey" "red" "green" "blue" shows his emotions. The colour "red" symbolizes anger, "grey" symbolizes dullness, "green" symbolizes envy, "blue" symbolizes sadness. We can infer that the persona is trying to convey that the mirrors can copy what he wears, but not how he is feeling.

Craftsmanship:

Structure→ Nothing significant.

Language→ Alliteration! (*dance* with my *dog*, *mirrors* can show me *multiplied* emphasizes that anyone can mimic his actions and fashion style, *feel my fall*, *shape* with *sound* emphasizes that no one can be him.)

Imagery: The colours(refer to emotions)

Movement: Flows smoothly with no irony.

Sound: The persona has an angry tone.

Synthesis: Everyone is unique.

group 3

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Hi 203, these are the six poems that were given to the groups. Hoping to see your journal entries and comments soon 😊

The Man In The Bowler Hat

I am the unnoticed, the unnoticeable man:
The man who sat on your right in the morning train:
The man who looked through like a windowpane:
The man who was the colour of the carriage, the colour of
the mounting
Morning pipe smoke.
I am the man too busy with a living to live,
Too hurried and worried to see and smell and touch:
The man who is patient too long and obeys too much
And wishes too softly and seldom.

I am the man they call the nation's backbone,
Who am boneless – playable catgut, pliable clay:
The Man they label Little lest one day
I dare to grow.

I am the rails on which the moment passes,
The megaphone for many words and voices:
I am the graph diagram,
Composite face.

I am the led, the easily-fed,
The tool, the not-quite-fool,
The would-be-safe-and-sound,
The uncomplaining, bound,
The dust fine-ground,
Stone-for-a-statue waveworn pebble-round

A. S. J. Tessimond

I Am

I am: yet what I am none cares or knows,
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Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost;
And yet I am! and live with shadows tost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
And e'en the dearest—that I loved the best—
Are strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod;
A place where woman never smil'd or wept;
There to abide with my creator, God,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie;
The grass below—above the vaulted sky.

John Clare

One

Only one of me
And nobody can get a second one
From a photocopy machine.
Nobody has the fingerprints I have.
Nobody can cry my tears, or laugh my laugh
Or have my expectancy when I wait.
But anybody can mimic my dance with my dog.
Anybody can howl how I sing out of tune.
And mirrors can show me multiplied
Many times, say, dressed up in red
Or dressed up in grey.
Nobody can get into my clothes for me
Or feel my fall for me, or do my running.
Nobody hears my music for me, either.
I am just this one.
Nobody else makes the words
I shape with sound, when I talk.
But anybody can act how I stutter in a rage.
Anybody can copy echoes I make.
And mirrors can show me multiplied
Many times, say, dressed up in green
Or dressed up in blue.

James Berry

“Telephone Conversation”

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. “Madam,” I warned,
“I hate a wasted journey—I am African.”
Silence. Silenced transmission of
Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was foully.
“HOW DARK?” . . . I had not misheard . . . “ARE YOU
LIGHT
OR VERY DARK?” Button B, Button A. Stench
Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.
Red booth. Red pillar box. Red double-tiered
Omnibus squelching tar. It *was* real! Shamed
By ill-mannered silence, surrender
Pushed dumbfounded to beg simplification.
Considerate she was, varying the emphasis—
“ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?” Revelation came.
“You mean—like plain or milk chocolate?”
Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light
Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted,
I chose. “West African sepia”—and as afterthought,
“Down in my passport.” Silence for spectroscopic
Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clanged her accent
Hard on the mouthpiece. “WHAT’S THAT?” conceding
“DON’T KNOW WHAT THAT IS.” “Like brunette.”
“THAT’S DARK, ISN’T IT?” “Not altogether.
Facially, I am brunette, but, madam, you should see
The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet
Are a peroxide blond. Friction, caused—
Foolishly, madam—by sitting down, has turned
My bottom raven black—One moment, madam!”—sensing
Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap
About my ears—“Madam,” I pleaded, “wouldn’t you rather
See for yourself?”

Wole Soyinka

Sheltered Garden

I have had enough.
I gasp for breath.

Every way ends, every road,
every foot-path leads at last
to the hill-crest—
then you retrace your steps,
or find the same slope on the other side,
precipitate.

I have had enough—
border-pinks, clove-pinks, wax-lilies,
herbs, sweet-cress.

O for some sharp swish of a branch—
there is no scent of resin
in this place,
no taste of bark, of coarse weeds,
aromatic, astringent—
only border on border of scented pinks.

Have you seen fruit under cover
that wanted light—
pears wadded in cloth,
protected from the frost,
melons, almost ripe,
smothered in straw?

Hilda Doolittle

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth.

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

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